

The truth of cessation is far more difficult to comprehend than the first two truths, for even though we have abundant experience of suffering, delusions etc. we do not have any experience of the irreversible cessation of any of our shortcomings.

Therefore, in order to cultivate faith and conviction in the total cessation of afflictive obstructions, the scriptures describe four steps: (1) understanding that ignorance and other delusions are impermanent, (2) understanding that there are methods to overcoming those shortcomings, (3) understanding that these methods are available to us, and (4) understanding that we can cultivate the methods in our own continuum.

However, we should start with reflecting on the possibility of *temporarily* reducing and stopping delusions. Having gained some conviction and understanding of that, we can establish the possibility of complete cessation in reliance on inference.

Therefore, by becoming aware and mindful of our various delusions we come to see that they are impermanent and changing; they are not solid and static but can be reduced and eradicated. The next step is then to contemplate whether there are methods to overcoming our delusions and whether the application of such methods is effective in bringing about some change. Having gained conviction in this we come to see that it is possible to gradually remove our delusions from our mental continuum; that they are not in the nature of our mind but can be separated from it. After this we need to comprehend that these methods are available to us and that we ourselves can cultivate them in our mental continuum.

These reflections are highly effective in transforming our intellectual understanding of the third truth into an experiential understanding, which in turn is essential for the pursue of engaging in dedicated and continuous Dharma practice.

This completes the explanation of the truth of cessation.

4. THE TRUTH OF THE PATH

The truth of the path constitutes the methods for attaining the truth of cessation. Paths are consciousnesses cultivated by listening, reflecting, and meditating on the Dharma. They are called *paths* because through being generated in our mental continuum, they gradually take us to liberation from cyclic existence.

Even though both the Theravada/Hinayana and the Mahayana traditions assert that the path that leads to Nirvana was described by the Buddha as the noble eight-fold path, in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition there is more emphasis on the three trainings and the five paths when explaining the fourth truth of the path. In this tradition, the noble eight-fold path is explained in the context of the thirty-seven aspects to enlightenment that are expounded in the fourth chapter of Maitreya's ***Abhisamayalamkara*** (***Ornament for Clear Realizations***).

However, there is no contradiction, for the noble eight-fold path is basically an extensive version of the three trainings in that it describes the different aspects of ethics, concentration, and wisdom. Hence, the three trainings and the eight-fold path constitute different types of practices that are important at every stage of our spiritual development.

The five paths, on the other hand, describe the different levels of attainment gradually taking us to liberation. In fact, the eightfold path is contained in the five paths, for a practitioner on any of the five paths must engage in the practice of the eight-fold path and thereby in the practice of the three trainings in order to be able to attain Nirvana. Therefore, the eight-fold path and the five paths are not contradicting systems but different paradigms of the truth of the path.

The three trainings are:

1. The training of ethics
2. The training of concentration
3. The training of wisdom

1. The training of ethics

Tibetan: ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱབ་པ། - Tsuel-trim kyi lab-pa (*Tsuel-trim* = ethics/morality, *kyi* = genitive, *lab-pa* = training)

The training of ethics basically refers to the practice of refraining from harmful physical, verbal, and mental actions, such as the ten non-virtuous (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so forth). Physical and verbal harmful actions are based on harmful mental actions, i.e. on delusions that induce the intention to harm others. Such harmful intent is the factor that transforms a physical and verbal action into a harmful action.

Ethics, on the other hand, are based on compassion and sincere concern for others. Practicing ethics constitutes the reduction of delusions and harmful intentions which naturally creates more peace and space in the mind. This is why the practice of ethics is the foundation for the other two trainings.

Taking vows, such as the Pratimoksha vows assists practitioners in their training of ethics, for they constrain them from engaging in physical and verbal negative actions.

2. The training of concentration

Tibetan: ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན་གྱི་བསྐྱབ་པ། - Ting-nge-dzin gyi lab-pa (*Ting-nge-dzin* = concentration)

The training of concentration constitutes the practice of mindfulness and one-pointed concentration. It leads to the ability to settle the mind on an object and remain focused on that object with clarity and intensity over an extended period of time.

3. The training of wisdom

Tibetan: ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་བསྐྱབ་པ། - She-rab kyi lab-pa (*She-rab* = wisdom)

The training of wisdom refers to the practice of developing discriminative wisdom that correctly realizes reality. All of our problems can be traced back to various misperceptions such as perceiving that which is in the nature of suffering to be in the nature of happiness, perceiving that which is impermanent to be permanent, perceiving that which impure and faulty to be pure and faultless, perceiving that which lacks and intrinsic and inherent nature to exist intrinsically and inherently.

The eight-fold path is:

- 1) Right view
- 2) Right thought
- 3) Right speech
- 4) Right aims of action
- 5) Right livelihood
- 6) Right effort
- 7) Right mindfulness
- 8) Right meditative stabilization

1) Right view

Tibetan: ཡང་དག་པའི་ལྟ་བུ། - yang-dag-pa'i da-wa (*yang-dag-pa* = right/correct/real, *da-wa* = view)

2) Right thought

Tibetan: ཡང་དག་པའི་ཉོག་པ། - yang-dag-pa'i dog-pa (*dog-pa* = thought/conception)

3) Right speech

Tibetan: ཡང་དག་པའི་ངག། - yang-dag-pa'i ngag (*ngag* = speech)

